

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 p.m. in the sanctuary at The Pentecostals of Alexandria. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Garold Anthony Mangun, pastor, The Pentecostals of Alexandria; his daughter, Miquell Mangun Hennigan, his son, Gentry, and his wife, Mickey; Rev. Keith Sjostrand, pastor, First United Pentecostal Church, Lonoke, AR, and his wife, Janice; and Rev. Bill Harden and his wife, Margaret. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message on the Celebration of Jubilee 2000

April 7, 2000

Warm greetings to everyone gathered in our nation's capital to celebrate Jubilee 2000. You can take pride in being a part of this extraordinary grassroots effort to reduce the debt of the world's most impoverished countries. Your work is helping to raise awareness and put this issue at the forefront of the national agenda.

In too many countries around the world today, excessive debt and unwise economic policies divert crucial resources from health, education, environment, and other social investments. Every year, two-thirds of the world's heavily-indebted poor countries (HIPC) spend more on debt service than on health or education. At the same time, basic human needs go unmet. In these countries, one in ten children dies before his or her first birthday, one in three children is malnourished, and the average adult has had only three years of schooling. This is wrong.

Last year, we worked with other creditor nations to reach agreement on a plan to triple the debt relief available for the world's poorest nations. The Cologne Debt Initiative promises to reduce more than 70 percent of the total debt of these countries, enabling them to commit additional resources to the health and education of their people. Thanks to your efforts and the efforts of a bipartisan group in Congress, we have made significant progress in lifting the burden of debt from half a billion people around the world. This year we must build on that progress. For debt relief to move forward, Congress must take action on my request to cover the remaining cost of the U.S. share of debt relief.

I applaud each of you for your commitment to Jubilee 2000. Let us say today that no nation on this Earth should be forced to choose between feeding and educating children or paying interest on excessive debt. Let us say that no children—no matter where they are born—should be deprived of the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Best wishes for a memorable event and continued success in your efforts.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 9.

Statement on the V-22 Aircraft Tragedy

April 9, 2000

On Saturday, April 8, the United States lost brave members of the Marine Corps, who died in the line of duty in the service of their country. They sacrificed their lives in a training accident involving a V-22 aircraft in Arizona. This terrible loss of life is a reminder of how so many men and women in the Nation's military put their lives at risk each and every day, so that we might be a free people and the cause of peace can be advanced throughout the world.

Hillary and I offer our prayers for those we have so suddenly lost and for their family and friends, whose burden of grief is so great. We pray that God may bless them all. Though their names and faces were not known to most of America before this tragic moment, I know that the American people will recognize in their names and faces in the days ahead the genuine quality of heroism.

Statement on the Department of Health and Human Services Report on Prescription Drug Coverage

April 10, 2000

Today's release of the Department of Health and Human Services report on prescription drug coverage, spending, and pricing practices provides further evidence of the need for a voluntary, affordable Medicare prescription drug benefit that is available to

all beneficiaries. This report makes clear that uninsured seniors not only lack prescription drug coverage but also are denied the significant discounts and rebates that those with coverage receive. This price gap is wide and growing. It's time to level the playing field for both coverage and prices for all of America's seniors.

Although the HHS report provides the most comprehensive analysis to date on prescription drugs, there is still much that needs to be learned and conveyed to the general public and to policymakers on this important issue. For this reason, I am also announcing that the administration will hold a national conference this summer on drug pricing and discounting practices and their impact on Medicare beneficiaries and pharmaceutical innovation. I believe this conference will help us determine how the best purchasing and quality improvement practices from the private sector can be incorporated into a Medicare prescription benefit.

I am encouraged that there is growing support from both parties to address the prescription drug cost and coverage problems that burden our Nation's seniors and people with disabilities. As today's report makes clear, the challenge of prescription drug coverage for the uninsured and underinsured Medicare populations is one that afflicts millions of beneficiaries of every age and income level. However, we must make certain that any legislative proposal is more than a benefit in name only. As I have said repeatedly, the only way this issue can be adequately remedied is through a Medicare drug benefit that is voluntary, affordable, accessible, and administered competitively, using the most successful private practices to negotiate discounts on behalf of seniors. It should be enacted in the context of broader reform that modernizes and strengthens the program. I believe that the release of today's report shows how vital it is to reach this goal.

Statement on the Announcement of a Summit Meeting Between South Korea and North Korea

April 10, 2000

I welcome the announcement that the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will hold a historic first summit in June. Direct dialog between the two Koreas is something we have long advocated and is fundamental to solving the problems of the Korean Peninsula. This announcement is testimony to the wisdom and long-term vision of President Kim Dae-jung's engagement policy. I congratulate both leaders on their decision to meet.

Statement on the Greek Legislative Elections

April 10, 2000

I congratulate Konstandinos Simitis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, and his PASOK party for their victory in the Greek legislative elections on April 9. I also applaud Konstandinos Karamanlis and the New Democracy Party for running a fine campaign. The elections demonstrated yet again the vitality of democracy in the land of its birth and should serve as an example to the rest of the world.

The election results and the debates fostered by the campaign show a broad consensus in favor of the course Greece has chosen: economic prosperity at home and fuller integration with the European Union; leadership in building stability in the Balkans and southeastern Europe; improved relations with Turkey; and progress toward a just and lasting settlement on Cyprus. On these and other issues, the United States pledges its continuing support and cooperation.